

St. James Herring Creek Episcopal Church
(Near) Tracy's Landing
Anne Arundel County, Maryland

HABS-MD-850

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PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA
District of Maryland

Historic American Buildings Survey
John H. Scarff, District Officer
Baltimore, Maryland

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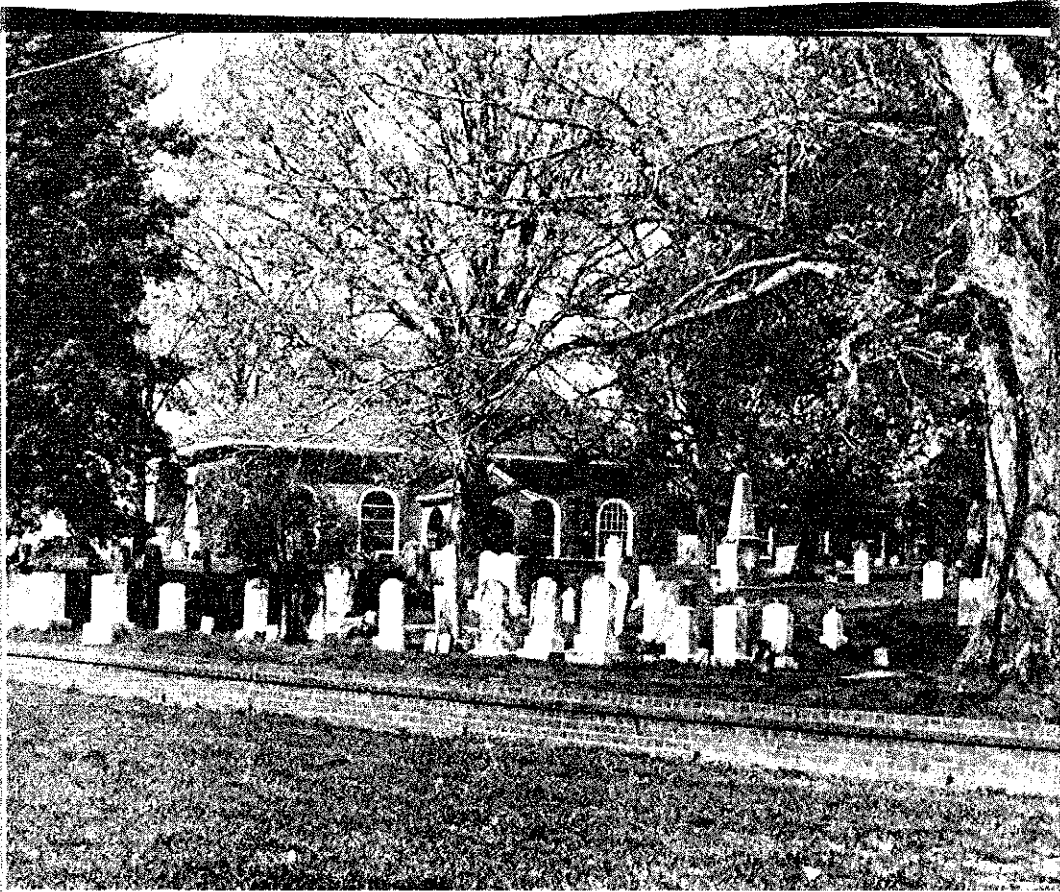
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St. James Church
Tracys Landing Vic.
Anne Arundel Co.

Left on Little Road 0.2 mi. to #258. Left 2.6 mi. to #2. Left 0.3 mi to:

3. ST. JAMES' CHURCH. Built of brick mellowed by age and covered with ivy, this fine Georgian building was completed in 1765. Despite its age, it is the third church of the St. James' Parish, the first on a site south of the present church, having existed even before the 1692 Act of Establishment. The second church was completed in 1698, and its first rector was the Reverend Henry Hall who remained in residence until his death. The Reverend Thomas Claggett served as rector of St. James before he became the first Bishop of Maryland. Such is the continuity of the St. James' Parish that both Hall and Claggett descendants still worship here. The tablets in the chancel were given in 1724. Maryland's oldest dated stones marking the 1665 graves of Christopher and Ann Birkhead were found in the churchyard. Rector: The Reverend Benjamin Narbeth.



ST. JAMES' CHURCH
(Old Herring Creek Parish)

Tracey's Landing, Maryland

Historical Notes

In the year 1692, under instructions from Sir Lionel Copley, Royal Governor, the Maryland Assembly passed the Establishment Act, by which the Province of Maryland was divided into thirty parishes. One of these was known as Herring Creek Parish.

There was a church in this parish before the Act of Establishment. Little is known of it except that it was called Herring Creek Church, and was situated south of the present church. The exact site is unknown.

In 1695, a church was ordered to be built on the present site. Although not completed, the church was in use in August, 1698. The Reverend Henry Hall became the first Rector. He remained in residence until his death in 1722.

As the old church was no longer adequate, in 1762 the Vestry ordered a new church to be built. This was begun in 1763 and is the present Parish Church.

The Reverend Thomas John Claggett became Rector in 1786. He resigned in 1792 to become the first Bishop of Maryland.

In the Churchyard are the two oldest dated stones in the state on Maryland. They were moved from a nearby private burying ground in 1888. They are markers for the graves of Christopher and Ann Birkhead, who died in 1665. A large slab dated 1708 marks the grave of The Honorable Seth Biggs, one of the first Vestrymen. Another, dated 1732, marks the grave of The Honorable William Lock. The Reverend Henry Hall, first Rector, is buried under the chancel of the older church.

Three old possessions of the Parish are of particular interest. There is the one hundred acre glebe, willed by Mr. and Mrs. James Rigby in 1700, which is still being worked for the church. In 1724, William Lock gave tablets in memory of his wife. These tablets are inscribed with the Creed, the Lord's Prayer and the Ten Commandments. They were moved from the old church to the present building. The baptismal bowl, used at all baptisms in the Parish, was purchased in 1750, as a memorial to William Lock.

The first lending library for the parishes of the Church of England, was established here in 1698, through the efforts of The Reverend Thomas Bray, the Commissary for the newly established church in the province of Maryland.

In that same year, The Reverend Henry Hall received one hundred twenty-five books for the St. James' (Herring Creek) Library. The Bray books are believed to constitute the first lending library in America, complete with rules to guide its operation. This same library, with many circulating books, is open every day.

The Holy Bible, bearing the publication date of 1603, said to have been used by the first Rector of the Parish, is owned by the Hall family. It is often loaned for exhibition.

The Vestry records are complete from 1692 to the present. The Parish Registers are also complete, except for the one covering the period of 1855—1890 which was destroyed when the old Rectory burned in 1900.

There are many descendants of old families, whose names appear on pre-Revolutionary records, who live in the neighborhood and take an active part in the work of St. James' Parish.

Compiled by Library Committee

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